BEING SPIRITUALLY MINDED & EARTHLY WISE

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Produced and distributed by All Peoples Church & World Outreach, Bangalore, INDIA.
First Edition Printed: January 2004
Revised Second Version: August 2005
Revised Digital Version: July 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

We know that all things work together for good, to those who love God and who are called according to His purposes. But what about the wrong choices, foolish mistakes, ill-informed decisions, terrible consequences of laziness, and other disasters that arise out of a lack of proper preparation? What about the things that take place because of a Christian's own doing? What about the Christian who is so spiritually minded that he has neglected to educate himself in the affairs of this life? What about the things that take place because of a Christian's own irresponsibility? Is God causing those things to happen?

We see several Christians suffering and being trapped amidst almost inescapable pressures. Our theology explains that God allows His people to go through and encounter difficult times, so that they could profit from them and be strengthened. But are all such experiences of suffering and difficulties God-ordained?

If we were to pause and examine things a little closely, we would be able to identify definite decisions and choices that eventually led to the predicament that we sometimes find ourselves in. It was our wrong decisions—in whatever fashion they may have been—that caused the mishaps we may be facing. Should we spiritualize our experiences and hold God responsible for such sufferings? It is true that all of us, being yet imperfect, make mistakes. Wrong judgments, in situations we encounter for the first time, may have severe consequences. How do our wrong choices affect the plans that God has for us? Do our mistakes defeat, alter, or in any way hinder God's highest and best from being fulfilled in our lives? This book is intended to awaken us to the practical side of our Christian faith. It is intended to make us understand our solemn responsibility in fulfilling God's plan for our lives. It is a call to stop spiritualizing our actions and assume responsibility for them. It is an exhortation to "wise up" in the affairs of this life.

2. Tension In The Christian Life

Colossians 3:1-2
1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.
2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

There seems to be a constant tension in a Christian's life, as he attempts to "*seek first the Kingdom of God*" while living among a people of another kingdom that is totally contrary to the Kingdom of God. We are here on the earth, but we are to seek those things that are above, of heaven. Living on the earth brings with it the tremendous responsibilities of building a career, becoming "someone," achieving success, amassing riches, and yet amidst the almost incessant business, we are urged to set our minds—our affections, our interests, our desires, our pursuits—on things above!! If there was any true challenge that would stretch the spiritual, mental, and emotional capabilities of a person, this seems to be it!! But then, God would not challenge us with something that we would be unable to fulfill. He gave us this command only because He knew that it would be within our reach, not by ourselves in isolation, but by the strength He supplies—to keep it. Nonetheless, ordering our lives by this command brings with it the "tensions" that every spiritually mature Christian functioning in the "real" world is sure to recognize.

There are numerous "issues" in everyday living where the Christian feels a "pull" in two directions. For instance, what are the true measures of success? Success by temporal standards is measured in terms of accomplishments and riches gained, while success in the Kingdom of God is determined by whether one is fulfilling the Father's will. There is nothing wrong in earthly accomplishments and acquiring riches, but the higher calling of God calls us to "*lose our life in order to find it*" (Matthew 16:25). So, the Christian faces a constant struggle as he approaches those points in life where he has to decide which of the paths to choose—the path that causes one to increase in worldly measures of success or the path that furthers one's progress toward fulfilling the high calling of God in Christ.

In addition to the many "areas of conflict," the Christian must contend with the world and the devil during his earthly pilgrimage. The Lord Jesus Himself said, "*The sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light*" (Luke 16:8). This ought not to be, but sometimes that is the way things are, especially when the children of light fail to lay a hold of the divine provisions of wisdom that the Father makes available to them. The Christian must learn to relate to, work with, and in many cases, compete with "the sons of this world," in the activities of everyday living. Also, the Christian is also a target of the adversary's schemes. There is a devil who delights in tempting and troubling the Christian

to lead him astray from God's highest and best.

3. Wrong Choices, Mistakes, And Their Consequences

Galatians 6:7-8
7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.
8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

During these and other "tensions," add the pressures of the world and the temptations of the devil; the Christian is likely to make mistakes. It seems almost pessimistic and negative to state this, yet it is true that we sometimes do make wrong choices and bad decisions in life. Think about the many believers who compromised when it came to choosing a life partner. Consider the many decisions related to academic and career choices, place of residence, friends, handling of finances, hobbies, and the like. As one progresses further in pursuing one's heavenly calling, things become even more serious because one begins to realize that every decision—where, when, what, and how one orders every detail of one's life—has its impact on the Kingdom of God, here on earth.

All our decisions have consequences. Some of us have not realized the seriousness of the matter. Knowing that our God is a God of grace, we consciously or unconsciously take "advantage" of this. Yes, everything in God's Kingdom is by grace and yet the Lord has placed certain responsibilities on us. It is our responsibility to live by the truths we have been taught. It is our responsibility to work industriously and to avoid slothfulness in whatever we do. It is our responsibility to crucify our flesh and resist the temptations of the world and the devil. These are some things the Lord will not do for us. He will provide us the wisdom (if we seek Him for it), but yet the decisions are ours to make and we must be ready to face the consequences of the decisions we make.

4. Therefore Be Wise

Matthew 10:16
Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

The sheep—the people of God—are not in a particularly friendly environment! Warning us about this, the Lord Jesus instructed us to be "*wise as serpents and harmless as doves*." Even though the world may be hostile and wicked, we are not to match its evil by being evil. Instead, we are to "*overcome evil with good*" (Romans 12:21). We are to walk in the grace and virtues of Christ. This is what Jesus meant when He urged us to be harmless as doves in the midst of an unfriendly world. The other aspect of Jesus' admonition was to be wise as serpents. We are to be wise and prudent while we live in this world. We are to couple our spirituality with wisdom and understanding, especially concerning the affairs of this life. The people of this world are most often not impressed by our spirituality. In fact, many people hold spiritually minded Christians in contempt and deep disregard. Therefore, it is going to take some wisdom if we are to survive and live triumphantly in the world.

5. Spiritual Yet Practical

As much as it is good and especially important to be spiritual, it is also necessary that we be practical. Just being spiritual does not guarantee one's success in fulfilling God's purpose and accomplishing much for the Lord on the earth. One must combine spirituality with practical wisdom and understanding. For example, just because you are a Christian, it does not mean that your marriage is guaranteed to succeed. You will need to understand the practical issues in building your marriage and family and the application of that understanding, to build a happy home. Likewise, it is not enough if you tithe and make offerings and then expect to prosper financially. In addition to this, you must learn how to order and use the rest of your money wisely.

Just because you believe that God heals and blesses His children with divine health, it does not mean that you can be undisciplined in your eating habits or abuse your body with overwork. God expects His people to maintain a sense of discipline in taking care of their bodies. After all, it is God's temple. Also, just because you know that God has placed a call on your life, it does not mean that you can "wander" through life aimlessly and still expect to accomplish all that God has planned for you. On the other hand, you will need to prepare, train, and equip yourself and move with God, step by step, to fulfill His call upon your life.

For those in Christian ministry, it is not sufficient to merely have a strong anointing to be fully effective on the earth. We need to learn how to organize, coordinate, and properly order our ministerial efforts to be an explosive force for God on the earth. It is true that it is the anointing that destroys satan's yokes and removes burdens from people's lives, but it is also true that mismanagement and lack of proper organization hinders many from maximizing the impact of the anointing that has been entrusted to them.

Sometimes, we pretend to be more spiritual than God Himself! We become so spiritual sometimes that we are of no earthly use. I suppose that even God would find it difficult to get us to do anything useful for His Kingdom in such situations! There was a time when I spent many days pondering on the issue of whether our actions affected, altered, and influenced God's plan for our lives. It was a very sobering time. On the one hand, I knew that God is sovereign, and His plans cannot be defeated. "*I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You*" (Job 42:2). Yet on the other hand, we see throughout the Bible that God requires human obedience and cooperation to accomplish His purposes. On a general "universal" level, God in His sovereignty wills to accomplish all that He has purposed for mankind, as a whole. But at the individual level, our actions do influence the unfolding and fulfillment of God's

purposes for our lives. It is a sad fact that many Christians fall short of fulfilling God's highest and best for their lives because of their own doing.

6. WISDOM–OUR SAFEGUARD

Ecclesiastes 9:16,18
16 Wisdom is better than strength ...
18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war…

Ecclesiastes 10:10
... Wisdom brings success.

Proverbs 4:7-8
7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom.
8 And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt her and she will promote you; she will honor you, when you embrace her.

As I continued to ponder on this, I remembered many instances in my own life where I had made mistakes. What if I had worked harder? What if I had chosen this instead of the other? What if I had invested my time and energy in a certain area instead of another? Would things have been different if I had the necessary information and knowledge back then—if I had known better? I could have avoided some of the hardships and difficulties I endured because of my own doing. As I considered these things, all I could do was to cry out to the Father in heaven, praying that I would not miss His highest and best for my life. I was also drawn to consider more seriously, the importance of making wise decisions. Wisdom is our safeguard. When we walk in wisdom we will walk securely. The Scripture tell us, "*A wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment, because for every matter there is a time and judgment*" (Ecclesiastes 8:5-6). There is a right time and a right decision for every matter. "Wisdom" knows what to do, how to do, and when to do the right thing for a given situation.

The Word of God says, "*Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established*" (Proverbs 4:26). In other words, pause, consider, and think twice or thrice about the decisions you make. More often than not, in making wise decisions we will need to acquire information to increase our knowledge and understanding about the matter at hand. It would greatly benefit us to talk to and learn from those who are more learned and experienced in a particular area. That is why the Scripture states, "*A wise man is strong, yes a man of knowledge increases strength; for by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety*"(Proverbs 24:5-6). We should not consider ourselves so spiritual that we do not need counsel and advice.

In ministry, gifting and anointing are especially important. However, for them to be put to maximum use and have a lasting impact, it is absolutely essential to add to our gifting and anointing, good leadership skills, good organization, hard work, discipline, continuous

improvement, and a lot of Godly wisdom.

7. THE GOODNESS OF GOD

Proverbs 3:5-6
5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;
6 in all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.

Nevertheless, our sovereign God is a good and merciful God. He does not forget even one little sparrow. Even the very hairs of our head are numbered (Luke 12:6-7). In sovereignty, the Lord supernaturally involves Himself in the details of our everyday life. All He requires from us is that we trust and acknowledge Him, and He has promised to direct our ways. Yes, the responsibility is on us to seek for wisdom and understanding in the many issues of life. As we do so, our steps will be ordered by the Lord. "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way*" (Psalm 37:23). God will order events in our lives to steer us in the course that He has ordained for us. In the process, if we still make mistakes, stumble, and fall, we will not be utterly ruined, for the Lord upholds us. That will not be the end of God's dream for our lives. "*Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the lord upholds him with His hand*" (Psalm 37:24). He will raise us up to our feet and set us on our journey again. Praise God for that!

Psalm 40:1-3
1 I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry.
2 He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps.
3 He has put a new song in my mouth—Praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD.

The psalmist, David, found himself in a "horrible pit," his feet stuck in "the miry clay." There may have been many reasons for him being in that situation. But he said that as he waited patiently for God, the Lord heard his cry and brought him out of the pit and established his goings (Psalm 40:1-3). Hallelujah! This is the goodness of God. Even if we make mistakes and fall into a horrible pit, the Lord can lift us up and set us back on solid ground. Our mistakes may cause us pain. Our ill-informed decisions may cause delays. Our failures may cause detours, but so long as we hold on to the Lord, He will enable us to still carry out His plans in our lives. God is greater than our failures. He is greater than our mistakes. If we learn from our mistakes, wise up, and continue to run the race, God will take us to our final destination. It is God who can turn our mourning into dancing. "*You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness*" (Psalm 30:11). God can turn things around from bad to beautiful. He turns our desperations into divine destinies. God is greater than time. "*So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you*" (Joel 2:25). He knows how to make up for the time that may have been lost because of our

wrong choices.

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About All Peoples Church

At All Peoples Church (APC), our vision is to be salt and light in the city of Bangalore and a voice to the nation of India and to the nations of the world.

At APC, we are committed to presenting the complete, uncompromised Word of God in the anointing and demonstration of His Holy Spirit. We believe that good music, creative presentations, brilliant apologetics, contemporary ministry techniques, latest technology and so on, can never substitute the God-ordained approach of proclaiming the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4-5; Hebrews 2:3-4). Our theme is Jesus, our content is the Word, our method is Holy Spirit power, our passion is people, and our goal is Christlike maturity.

With our main base in Bangalore, All Peoples Church has several other church locations in India. To get a current listing and contact information of All Peoples Church locations, please visit our website at **www.apcwo.org/locations** or send an email to contact@apcwo.org.

DO YOU KNOW THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU?

About 2000 years ago, God came into this world as a man. His name is Jesus. He lived a perfectly sinless life. Since Jesus was God in flesh, everything He said and did revealed God to us. The words He spoke were the very words of God. The things He did were the actions of God. Jesus did many miracles on the Earth. He healed the sick and suffering. He opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame to walk and healed every kind of sickness and disease. He fed the hungry by miraculously multiplying a few loaves of bread, calmed the storm and did many other wonderful things.

All of these actions reveal to us that God is a good God who wants people to be well, whole, healthy, and happy. God wants to meet the needs of people.

So why then would God decide to become a man and step into our world? Why did Jesus come?

All of us have sinned and done things that are unacceptable before the God who created us. Sin has its consequences. Sin is like a great unsurpassable wall between God and us. Sin separates us from God. It prevents us from knowing and having a meaningful relationship with the One who created us. Therefore, many of us try to fill this void with other things.

Another consequence of our sins is eternal separation from God. In God's court, the penalty for sin is death. Death is eternal separation from God in hell.

But the good news is that we can be free from sin and be restored to God. The Bible says, **"For the wages [payment] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).** Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world when He died on the cross. Then, three days later He rose again, showed Himself alive to many and then went back into heaven."

God is a God of love and mercy. He does not wish that any person be lost in hell. And so, He came, to provide a way for the entire human race to be free from sin and its lasting consequences. He came to save sinners—to rescue people like you and me from sin and eternal death.

To receive this free forgiveness of sins, the Bible tells us that we have to do just one thing—accept what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross and to believe in Him whole-heartedly.

"… through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).

“That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

You too can receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins if you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is a simple prayer to help you make a decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for you on the cross. This prayer will help you express your acceptance of what Jesus has done for you and receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins. This prayer is only a guideline. You can also pray in your own words.

Dear Lord Jesus, today, I have understood what You did for me on the cross. You died for me, you shed Your precious blood and paid the penalty for my sins, so that I could be forgiven. The Bible tells me that whoever believes in You will receive forgiveness for their sins.

Today, I make a decision to believe in You and to accept what You did for me, by dying for me on the cross and rising again from the dead. I know I cannot save myself by my own good works, neither can any other human save me. I cannot earn forgiveness for my sins.

Today, I believe in my heart and say with my mouth that You died for me, You paid the penalty for my sins, You rose again from the dead, and by faith in You, I receive forgiveness and cleansing for my sins..

Thank You Jesus. Help me to love You, to know You more and to be faithful to You. Amen.

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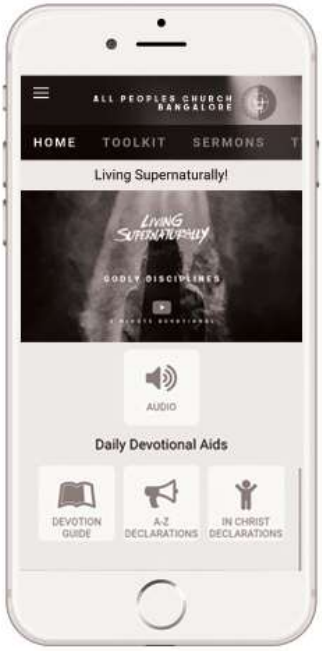

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All Peoples Church Bible College and Ministry Training Center (APC-BC), in Bangalore, India, provides Spirit-filled, anointed, hands-on training and equipping for ministering in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit along with doctrinally sound and intellectually stimulating study of God's Word. We believe in developing the whole person for ministry emphasizing godly character, deep roots in the Word of God, and powerful demonstrations of signs, wonders and miracles - all flowing out of an intimate relationship with the Lord.

At APC-BC in addition to sound teaching we emphasize the love of God in demonstration, the anointing and presence of the Holy Spirit and the supernatural work of God. Several young men and women have been trained and sent out to fulfill God's call over their lives.

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